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[Title Page]

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THE KARĪN AND KARĪNEH.

[With Plate XIV.]

By Winifred S. Blackman.[1]

Just as I was about to publish the material I have gathered on the question of a "double" in Modern Egypt my attention was drawn to Mr. Hornblower's interesting article on the same subject.[2] During the last three years I have been making very careful enquiries on this point in both Middle and Upper Egypt, my research being carried out very largely among the women. My information differs somewhat from that obtained by Mr. Hornblower, though, as his was obtained in Lower Egypt and mine in Middle and Upper Egypt, the difference in the localities may account for the discrepancies. I should add that the information was given to me quite gratuitously; I tried to avoid asking leading questions, but I would touch on the subject in a natural way when conversing with the women. Also, while listening to their talk, remarks on the "double" would drop out in the course of their conversation. I know how easy it is to make mistakes when trying to get at the truth of such matters, and for this reason I have hesitated to publish anything on this belief until this year, and even now, after trying carefully to verify each point through independent witnesses, I am aware that further study may necessitate a partial revision of what I am stating here.

The modern Egyptian *fellāḥīn* believe in a variety of superhuman beings, most of whom live a subterranean existence, though they may often appear above ground. Among these beings are the *'afārīt* (sing. *'afrīt*) or *ginn*, who have an organized society with a king at their head. These beings are sometimes malevolent, sometimes benevolent, and can be controlled by magicians, both male and female. The "double," which is born with every human being, is quite distinct from the *'afrīt*, and it is called, in the case of a man, the *ḳarīn* (colleague; companion), in the case of a woman, *ḳarīneh*. The man is always born with his male, as is the woman with her female, counterpart. I have not as yet heard this "double" called the *ukht* (sister), though an Egyptian friend of mine, when explaining the word *karīneh* to me three years ago, translated it as "fairy sister." The *ginn*, or *'afārīt*, are often called

[1] I desire to thank the Trustees of the Percy Sladen Memorial Fund for the grant made towards my expedition in 1923, while Oxford University Research Student in Anthropology, during which time part of the material on this subject was collected.

[2] "Traces of a Ka-Belief in Modern Egypt and Old Arabia." *Ancient Egypt*, Pt. III, 1923,

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"our brothers and sisters beneath the earth," but they are separate beings from the *aḳrān* (pl. of *ḳarīn*), though the two communities are in touch with each other.

The *aḳrān* are believed to be of different colours, some being white, some black; their looks also vary, as some are beautiful and some are ugly. This belief is easily accounted for, as each peron's *ḳarīn* is a facsimile of him or herself, and doubtless the colours are racial distinctions. The *aḳrān* are not, I believe, always malevolent, though stories of their mischief-making propensities are commoner than accounts of their good deeds.

Not only do the *aḳrān* resemble their prototypes on earth in person, but also in character—in fact, they faithfully reflect in themselves all the actions, both good and bad, of their earthly duplicates. Thus, if a man or woman gets into a temper, his or her "double" does the same; if they suffer pain and sickness, so also does his *ḳarīn*, or her *ḳarīneh*. This point was brought out clearly one day last year when a large number of women had come to see me and to have their eyes doctored. One of them was speaking about her *ḳarīneh*, so I said, "But your eyes are very bad now, what about those of your *ḳarīneh*?" "Oh," she replied, "her eyes are also bad." "Poor thing," I said; "but who is looking after her eyes?" "Why, your *ḳarīneh*, ginab es-sitt," the woman immediately answered.

The following is another example of the intimate connection between a human being and his or her "double." When an argument begins between two or more men or women and a mischievous bystander wants to lead them into a real quarrel, he will take two bricks and place them together thus— ⫽⫽, or he will take off one of his shoes and place it on the ground upside down, *i.e.* with the sole uppermost. This will make the disputants quarrel violently, and finally they will resort to blows. As soon as the bricks are taken apart, or the shoe replaced on the foot of its owner, the quarrelling will stop. My informant himself had witnessed an experiment of this kind. A friend of his, seeing two men arguing in the cultivation, placed one of his shoes, sole upwards, on the ground. The disputants immediately started a violent quarrel, hitting out and striking each other. Then the friend replaced the shoe on his foot, and at once the quarrel ceased.

The belief is that when people start quarrelling their *aḳrān* come up above the ground and quarrel too. They are, of course, invisible, but they see the bricks or the shoe, as the case may be, and as long as the bricks remain together, or the shoe remains on the ground, they will continue to fight. As long as the *aḳrān* quarrel, the people to whom they belong must quarrel too.

Again, a man's *ḳarīn* marries the *ḳarīneh* of his wife, and when a man or woman dies, his *ḳarīn* or her *ḳarīneh* dies also. I had been informed of these facts several times, and the reality of the belief was brought home to me in the following way. An Egyptian friend of mine died last year, and I was sitting with his wife one day after his death, when a woman magician came to pay us a visit. I suggested a *séance*, whereupon the magician seated herself in a corner of the room and asked for a blanket

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with which she completely covered herself. Presently she clapped her hands two or three times, thus summoning "the brothers and sisters beneath the earth," *i.e.* the *'afārīt*. They spoke to her, and after various messages from them had been conveyed to us through the magician, my friend's wife asked her to enquire what had become of her husband's *ḳarīn*. "Oh," replied the *'afārīt*, "he is dead also, and your *ḳarīneh* is a widow." The magician was something of a ventriloquist, and her voice changed completely when the *'afārīt* spoke through her.

As I have stated above, the *aḳrān*, besides being like their human prototypes in colouring and physical features, also resemble them in character. The Egyptians are of a very jealous disposition, and this quality is strongly marked among the women with regard to the possession of children. Childlessness is a real terror to them, and the more children they have, the happier they are. Such, at any rate, is the case among the *fellāḥīn*. They are often very jealous of the offspring of another, and therefore precautions are taken to protect the children from the ill-effects of the "evil-eye," or "eye of envy."

A woman's *ḳarīneh* may also be jealous of the human children, in spite of the fact that if a child is born to a woman the *ḳarīn* or *ḳarīneh* of that child represents the offspring of the mother's *ḳarīneh*. Various measures are taken to safeguard the human child from the possible machinations of its mother's "double." Indeed, the mother herself, during her pregnancy, must also be protected, for her *ḳarīneh*, in a fit of jealousy, may come at night while she sleeps and strike her "on the belly," thus causing premature birth. This is curious, as, presumably, the mother's *ḳarīneh* would also lose her child. But, at any rate in some parts of Egypt, the belief is that when a child dies it goes to the mother's *ḳarīneh*, who would in this way possess at least one child, even if her own child (*i.e.* the human child's "double") died at the same time as its human prototype.

Sometimes the *ḳarīneh* speaks roughly to the expectant mother, but refrains from striking her. In such a case the woman will go at daybreak to see a magician or a *sheikh* and will ask him to write a protection (*ḥigāb*) for her. The protection (or written charm) is the agreement of the *ḳarīnehs* with King David—for it happened one day that David saw one of them unfasten her hair, and fire was issuing from her mouth. So he asked her, "What is your work?" She answered him, "If a woman is pregnant, I come by night and strike her on her belly, so that she will give birth to a dead child. And if I do not do this, but allow her to bear the child safely, I may sometimes come and strike the baby, or cause a snake to bite or a scorpion to sting it, so that it will die." Then David said to her, "If this is your work I will kill you," and he spoke threateningly to her. So she made an agreement with him and said, "If a mother carries your words on her person I will never do her harm." So David consented to this suggestion and let her go on her way. Therefore, if a pregnant woman thinks she has cause to fear that her *ḳarīneh* will do her an injury, she will apply for a *ḥigāb* and wear it till her child is born, when she will give it to the infant,

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[773] [776] hanging it round its neck till it is seven years old, after which period it will be immune.

[751] [843] The *karînch* seen by King David was the queen of them all, and the promise she gave is binding on all her subjects. She herself is not, according to my informant, the "double" of any human being; she is by herself, and, like the king of the *afrâs*, lives for ever.

[304] [751] [761] If a woman's children have died one after the other, soon after they were born, when another one arrives she has it tattooed with a small round spot in the centre of the forehead, while a similar spot is tattooed on the left ankle. After this she believes that her *karînch* will not attempt to touch her child.

Apparently, during the notable interview between King David and the queen of the *karînchs* the latter promised him that if a child bore these marks she would not touch him or her.

[776] [753] A *karînch* may do good or evil to a mother's children till they have passed the age of seven years. She only does harm, so I was told, if the mother has been doing something wrong. For instance, if the *karînch* clutches a child by the throat, it means that the child's mother has been ill-tempered, and so on.

A man's *karîn* does not affect his children, it only affects him. If he should lose his temper with his wife or family, or with his friends, or does wrong in any way, and goes to bed unrepentant, he may wake up in the morning and find that some illness has attacked him. This has been caused by his *karîn*. When he is sorry and expressed [755] repentance, or has called in a magician, who will give him a charm to wear under his left arm, he will be cured.

[776] [753] [755] [778] If a child seems sickly and gets thinner and weaker every day, the mother knows that her *karînch* is trying to draw her child away from her. Various devices are resorted to in order to mitigate this evil. Near a small village in Asyût Province there is a large stone which is called the stone of the Sheikha Fâtimeh, who is believed to be buried here. If a child is being drawn away by its mother's *karînch*, the mother will take it on a Friday to this stone, near which she will place the child, and she herself [787] will stay to watch over it. If the child goes to sleep quietly the mother knows that it will recover, but if it cries and refuses to sleep she takes it home again, knowing full well that it will shortly die. I have myself seen a child lying near the stone fast asleep, with its mother sitting close by. (Pl. XIV, Fig. 1.) 7/1

In a village in Middle Egypt there is an old disused graveyard, crowned by the domed tomb of a celebrated local sheikh. The other graves are now fallen into ruin, and many of them show large, gaping hollows. (Pl. XIV, Fig. 2.) 7/1 A woman whose child is affected by her *karînch* will take it and place it in one of these cavities, the results being the same as in the case of the stone of the Sheikha Fâtimeh.

[755] A child may suffer from a cough, accompanied by gasping, as if it could hardly breathe. It is liable to such an attack at any time till it has passed the age of seven years. To cure it, the mother or grandmother (either paternal or maternal), or a

7/1 [See Category 116, plate facing p. 168--Analyst]

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woman friend, will sometimes carry the child early in the morning to a *zirîbeh* made of *bûs* (dried *dura* stalks) in which the sheep are kept in the field at night. She also takes a knife with her, and, entering the *zirîbeh*, will hand the child over to the shepherd. The shepherd, having placed the child on its back on the ground, will take the knife which the woman brought with her and will place the blunt edge against the child's throat and pretend to cut it. The child will then start crying, upon which the man will remove the knife and return the child to the woman who brought it. It is believed that good angels watch over the sheep, as they are looked upon as gentle animals, and that these angels, on hearing the child cry, will drive away its mother's *karînch* who has caused the illness by clutching at the child's throat. According to my informant, this belief is common all over Egypt.

I could quote many instances of illness caused to children by their mother's *karînch* during this dangerous period of seven years.

That a woman's *karînch* may sometimes perform a kindly action is shown in the following belief. One of the many devices resorted to by a woman whose child has died and who has failed to produce further offspring is as follows. The would-be mother will lie down between the lines on a railway track, remaining in this position while the train passes over her. One of the reasons given for this practice is that when a mother is thus frightened her *karînch* will come to her with the soul of her dead child and cause it to re-enter the mother. This implies a belief in reincarnation, and I have obtained further information which points to a definite belief in rebirth. For an ancient example of belief in reincarnation reference may be made to the well-known Tale of the Two Brothers.[1]

The following is a translation of the written charm worn by an expectant mother who has reason to fear harm being done to her offspring by her *karînch*. The charm is obviously Coptic, but it is used by Muslim mothers as well as those professing Christianity: "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for He is a great Lord who created the seen and the unseen things; He whom we cannot see with our eyes, and with whom no evil will dwell; who also knoweth well all things that will happen in the future; to whom all the angels cry, saying 'Hallowed be Thy Name'; from whom all evils fly away; who is praised by all things in the Heaven and all the earth, for He is a mighty Lord. Oh, mighty God, I ask Thee to protect N.N., who is carrying my protection, and protect what is in her womb, and him whom she will nurse with her milk, from the evil *karînch*, for the sake of Thy mighty ring (*i.e.* the charm square)."

The probable meaning of the square is, so I was told, "Go on Gabriel, go on Michael, go on Raphael, go on Suriyal, go on Maniyal, for the sake of our Mighty God, and burn this *karînch* in the fire." These are said to be the words of King David. (Pl. XIV, Fig. 3.)

[1] Petrie, *Egyptian Tales*, ii, pp. 16 ff.

[See category 116, plate facing P. 168 -- Analyst]

778
755
[MGA]

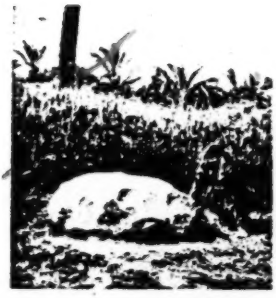

FIG. 1.—STONE OF THE SHEIKHA FATIMEH.

FIG. 2.—RUINED GRAVES AT LAHUN, IN THE APERTURES OF WHICH CHILDREN ARE PLACED WHEN AFFECTED BY THE MOTHER'S ḳarineh.

751
843

باسم الله المتعت بالرقائم لهو الرحمن العظيم غالوه جميع المظهرات القوية الذى لا يراه
العيون ولا تخالطه الظنون يعلم بما يكون قبل أن يكون ترتعد الملوكة من هيبة
وتخاف الشياطين من قدرته يسبح له كل ما فى السموات وعلى الأرض وهو على كل شئ قدير
اللهم باسمك العظيم وزراعك القوى ونورك الكريم أن تحافظ على حاملة هذا الباب
هذا وعلى ما فى بطنها وعلى التى تسقيه من لبنها من القرينة اللعينة الملعونة بحق هذا
الناتم وما فيه من اسمك العظيم

توكل يا جبرائيل	ي			
توكل يا حيائيل				
توكل يا سوفائيل				
توكل يا سوميال				

توكل يا ميال بقوة وقدرة الله العظيم الأعظم وعرشه الوسيع ونوره البهيج بحرمة
القرينة الملعونة وسيط النار

FIG. 3.—CHARM AND CHARM SQUARE WORN BY AN EXPECTANT MOTHER.

THE KARÎN AND KARÎNEH.

[facing p. 168]

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The beliefs described above differ somewhat from those recounted by Prof. Seligman in "Ancient Egyptian Beliefs in Modern Egypt," in *Essays and Studies presented to William Ridgeway*, Cambridge, 1913, pp. 448–451, and in Mr. G. D. Hornblower's above-quoted article. Both these authorities have obtained their information from men, the former mainly from an educated Egyptian of Luxor, the latter from an aged native of Helwan and from a wise-man of Nezlet Batrân, a village near the Gizeh pyramids. The last-mentioned informant had come in contact with an Italian spiritualist, from whom he had adopted some of his paraphernalia.

Prof. Seligman says that, according to the information he obtained, "everyone has an invisible companion of the opposite sex" who is regarded and spoken of as a "sister" or "brother," and that "the death of one or more children in a family is often attributed to the influence of their mother's 'brother' (companion) and the mother and surviving children may wear iron anklets to avert this danger." He goes on to say that, "A variant of this belief asserts that if the child dies while still an infant in arms it is the *qarîna* of the mother that is responsible, but the *qarîna* of the father causes the death of bigger children" (p. 450).

I have made very careful enquiries into the question of the sex of the mother's "double" from among a variety of people, chiefly women, in Fayûm and Asyût Provinces. So far as my researches have gone, I find that my information on this point differs from that of Prof. Seligman's, for I have been invariably told that a woman has a *karînch* (the feminine form) and a man a *karîn* (masc.). It will be noted that Prof. Seligman speaks of a "*qarîna*" in the case of both men and women. I have not heard the "double" spoken of as either a "brother" or a "sister," such epithets being reserved for the *'afârît* (sing. *'afrît*), who, as I stated above, are often called "our brothers and sisters beneath the earth." It is true that, according to my informants, the *afrâs* also live beneath the earth, but they have a separate social organization to the *'afârît*.

I also have found that it is the custom for a mother to wear an iron anklet if she has lost all, or most of, her children; or one of her surviving children may wear the iron anklet, which, it is believed, will protect the next child that is born. I have obtained such anklets from a village in Asyût Province and also from one in Fayûm Province. I have always been definitely informed that the father's *karîn* has no influence whatsoever over his children at any age.

Mr. Hornblower also states that, according to his informants, a "sister" is born with every man, though the word *karînch* (fem. of *karîn*) was not used.

I questioned some of my Egyptian friends in Oxford on this point, and they also declared that according to the belief held by the *fellâh*în, a man is born with a *karînch* and a woman with a *karîn*, thus upholding Prof. Seligman's and Mr. Hornblower's statements. But these Egyptian gentlemen all come from Lower Egypt, so that I think the differences between my information and that of the two above-named authorities may be owing either to difference of locality (for my information

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was obtained in Middle and Upper Egypt, as, indeed, was Prof. Seligman's), or that it is mere "men's talk," the men possibly preferring to think that their "double" is a female companion, rather than one of their own sex.

In any case, the belief in the existence of this "double," of whichever sex it may be, is widely spread and deeply rooted in the lives of the *felläḥîn*.[1]

FIG. 1.

The above information is certainly suggestive of survivals of the ancient Egyptian ideas about the *Ka*. The modern idea that the *karîn* is born at the same time as its human counterpart calls to mind the sculptured scenes in the temples of Luxor and Deir el-Bahri depicting the god Khnum modelling the royal child and its *Ka* (Fig. 1), and their simultaneous birth.

[1] Since writing this article, I have been to Egypt again, and I have found that the belief that the *karîn* is of the opposite sex to its human "double" is more or less confined to the educated classes. Further study on this point goes to prove that my assertion that a man has a *karîn* and a woman a *karînch* is correct, at any rate among many of the *felläḥîn*. I have lately come across an interesting variety in this belief, but I hope to investigate it more thoroughly before venturing to publish it.